

AFGHANISTAN

KHAD

'SECRETS' OF INTELLIGENCE APPARATUS ELABORATED

London FOREIGN REPORT in English 28 Mar 85 pp 4-5

[Text]

Soviet KGB officers are having considerable success with building up an efficient secret police network in Afghanistan. The rapid growth of the Khad (an acronym for Khedmat-e Etila'at-e Daulati, or State Information Services) has been lavishly financed since 1979 by the Soviet Union. The Khad is a parallel authority in Afghanistan; the government makes no attempt to supervise it.

The Khad's director is Dr Najibullah Ahmedzai, a cousin of President Babrak Karmal and an early member of the Parcham faction of the communist party from the mid-1960s. Najibullah is 44 and good-looking. He graduated in medicine from Kabul University. In 1979 he foregathered with Karmal and other senior Parchamis in Czechoslovakia (after the rival Khalq faction temporarily took power in Kabul). Najibullah is said to have taken a course in secret police methods at this time in eastern Europe.

The Khad aims at getting accurate intelligence about the Afghan resistance, and arresting as many activists and guerrillas as it can detect. Its agents have infiltrated many guerrilla camps inside Afghanistan and placed agents in offices of the exile organisations in Peshawar, Pakistan. Its networks of local informers in the provinces have paid off. The Khad captures guerrilla commanders when they go home to visit their families and receives tip-offs of imminent guerrilla raids. Resistance groups have, however, also infiltrated the Khad.

The Khad's headquarters is in the capital, Kabul, where it maintains a head office at Shishdarak and scores of smaller offices. Its main interrogation centre is in a section of the prime minister's office building, the Sedarat palace.

Suspects arrested in house-to-house searches, often in army and Khad operations, are routinely tortured. Plain-clothes agents also make arrests during curfew hours, taking suspects away from their homes without a warrant and without revealing where they will be taken. Suspects are often held for weeks or months. The aim is to extract the names of guerrillas hiding out in the city with weapons and activists who produce and distribute clandestine anti-regime propaganda known as "night letters".

The Khad uses a wide variety of tortures. Suspects undergo electric shocks; they are deprived of sleep for long periods; their hair is torn out; their hands are placed under chair legs; cigarettes are stubbed out on their bodies; they are forced to stand for hours on end and are sometimes suspended from the ceiling. Many suspects have been beaten with iron rods, or threatened with execution or, in the case of women, with gang rape. There is a special Khad section for female political prisoners in the prime minister's office building.

Many former prisoners have said that Russians are often in command during interrogation sessions of higher-level suspects. The KGB office which supervises, or manages, the Khad is on Darulaman Road, close to the Soviet embassy. Soviet specialists are said to have been present when electrically charged batons are applied to the suspects' bodies and electric wires are tied to their feet and genitals. Deaths frequently occur under torture.

The size of the Khad is often wildly exaggerated by Afghans—probably a measure of the fear in which it is held. Our sources say that in the capital alone it has at least 10,000 agents. Outside Kabul, it has several times that number. There is also a small army of paid informers who gather information in towns and villages. In many areas, the Khad runs its own courts where its agents are the prosecutors, the judges and the executioners.

The Khad also pays the salaries of mullahs who have declared themselves pro-regime and "progressive" and joined the newly formed Religious Affairs Directorate. Since 1982, the Khad has shared with the ministry of tribes and nationalities responsibility for training the militia along the Pakistani border.

Although its efforts have produced useful information about the guerrillas, many of its agents have been detected and murdered. In Kabul, several high-ranking Khad officers have been killed by resistance gunmen and at least three Khad offices have been blown up since 1982, with heavy loss of life.

COPYRIGHT: World copyright reserved, 1985
The Economist Newspaper Ltd.

CSO: 4600/379